

March 19, 2013
Brigantine, New Jersey

A Council Meeting was held this date in Council Chambers in City Hall at 6:00 P.M. with Mayor Guenther presiding.

Present: Simpson, McClay, Picardi, DeLucry, Pullella, Kern

Mayor Guenther led the flag salute after which Councilman Kern offered a brief prayer.

Mayor Guenther read the statement pertaining to the Open Public Meetings Act.

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Mayor Guenther announced that this was a budget discussion meeting and announced that City Manager Jennifer Blumenthal would discuss the different budget options that have been presented to Council. Ms. Blumenthal explained that the scenarios include using additional surplus and using part of the fund balance from the water and sewer utility fund; saying that she is still recommending this. Ms. Blumenthal explained that the other scenarios included a 3.4, 2.2 and 2.1 cent tax increase; saying that these included cuts in the operational budget. Ms. Blumenthal then said that some scenarios include cuts to salary and wages which are comprised of new hires, zero pay increases for non union members and zero pay increases for union members with open contracts and cuts to summer employees and hours at the recycle yard. Ms. Blumenthal explained that one scenario includes layoffs of 13 people prior to the beginning of the year; further stating that it would include 1 administrative, 3 fire, 4 police, 2 public works and 3 beach. Councilman Simpson said he would not feel comfortable with employees losing their jobs. Councilman Pullella asked if there were employees that were eligible to retire and Ms. Blumenthal said that there were, but she didn't have a firm number yet. Councilwoman McClay asked if the City adopted the 3.4 cent tax scenarios and if the retirements go as planned, will the layoffs not happen and Ms. Blumenthal stated that the layoffs would not happen; but there might still be restructuring within the City. Ms. Blumenthal stated that she is not recommending this, but one of the ways to cut this year's budget would be to cut summer staffing; which would include beach taggers and lifeguards; saying that she felt this would have a negative impact on the community. Councilman DeLucry questioned one of the scenarios that did include salary and wage reductions, asking if this included the summer employment positions spoken about earlier. Ms. Blumenthal responded that they are those positions and taking out any increases for non contractual employee and any open contract employee, as well as hour reduction at the recycling yard. Councilman Picardi commented that the 6.2 increase was not an option for him. Councilman Pullella also stated that he was not in favor of the 6.2 increase. Councilman Kern stated that he was only in favor of a 1 cent increase, which he felt would cover the cost the city lost due to Hurricane Sandy.

Public Comment

Janet Saudargas 463 West Shore Drive thanked everyone who was involved in the BrigStrong meeting that took place, saying it was very helpful.

Vince Sera of 912 Sarazen Drive stated that Council needs to invest for the future of the City.

Anne Philips of 308 27th Street spoke about the budget, saying that the taxpayers are struggling to cope, saying that the employees of the City are well compensated already and asked if they would consider some givebacks.

A resident of 29 Sailfish Drive commented that the City's costs are out of control and asked if the employees to consider cutbacks and/or furloughs.

Chris Tate of 505 Hackney Place commented that he has recently moved to the City full time and the tax rate he pays now is lower than where he lived in Pennsylvania.

Frank Papa of 105 N. Roosevelt Blvd. asked if there was an employee review done in all departments including the CER department, saying that he felt there could be cuts made to that department.

Mike Corbo stated that he is the director of the Atlantic County Fire Academy and discussed the importance of having a fully staffed fire department.

Conrad Wieler of 104 2nd Street South asked Council to consider selling some of the City's property and asked if buyouts could be considered.

Close of Public Comment

Council Comments

Councilman Pullella made a motion to have the City Manager to draw up a job description for the position of Director of Public Safety and advertise it on the website and in the newspaper. Councilman Simpson questioned why this was being done when the City had a hiring freeze currently in effect. Ms. Blumenthal stated that the Chief of Police was getting ready to retire, the fire department currently has an Acting Fire Chief and the Chief of the Lifeguards currently retired so there needs to be some direction taken. Mayor Guenther stated that this special Council meeting was scheduled for the discussion of the budget and the fact that this discussion was taking place tonight was less than transparent because this item was on the agenda for tomorrow's Council meeting and interested parties might want to attend then to hear the discussion. Councilman DeLucry commented that there was nothing non-transparent about putting the job description out there. Councilman Kern suggested that the motion wait until tomorrow night, so it may follow the advertised agenda.

Councilman Kern moved, seconded by Councilman Pullella adjourn the meeting.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 P.M.

Mayor Philip J. Guenther

Lynn Sweeney, RMC
City Clerk